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ABSTRACT

This is the second in a series of three reports addressing issues, problems, and potential solutions critical to the development of accessible, affordable, and quality day care in Oregon. At present, the majority of Oregon households have two or more wage earners, and the majority of Oregon children need child care on a daily basis. Priority issues discussed include: (1) quality in child care programs; (2) state regulation of child care services; (3) making child care affordable; (4) establishment of an Office of Child Care; (5) encouraging employer and corporate involvement; (6) parental leave; (7) infant and toddler care; (8) school age day care; (9) day care for special needs children; (10) child care information and referral services; and (11) liability insurance. Emerging issues discussed include teen-parent child care, ill child care, community planning, and national child care issues that affect Oregon. The concluding section of the report reviews 1987's accomplishments: legislation acted upon, seven community meetings sponsored by the Oregon Commission on Child Care, and a statewide conference sponsored by the commission. References cite literature concerning child care in other states, Oregon studies and reports, major books and reports, and periodicals and articles. (RH)

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Child Care in Oregon: Emerging Solutions

Executive Summary

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1988 Interim Report to the Governor and Legislature

Oregon Commission on Child Care

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FINDINGS	RECOMMENDATIONS
The majority of Oregon's children need child care on a daily basis, but there is no public system for sharing costs, upgrading facilities, credentialing caregivers or providing technical assistance.	1. Continue to emphasize the long range cost effectiveness of quality care and collaborative solutions. 2. Establish a family day care specialist in Children's Services Day Care Unit. 3. Establish a child care training fund which provides scholarships or reimbursement for provider and center accreditation. 4. Encourage community colleges to provide small business and program assistance for day care homes and centers. 5. Develop a technical assistance partnership with USDA Child Care Food Program.
While the number of children in full time care is increasing rapidly, the state has decreased its day care regulatory ability. The majority of children are in uncertified, unmonitored facilities.	1. Abolish misleading home provider registration. 2. Establish a voluntary family day care certification program. 3. Require certification for homes receiving state subsidies for children in care. 4. Cap the caseload and increase the number of day care certifiers. 5. Classify certifiers with other caseworkers in a similar salary range.
Low income working parents and those seeking employment must be provided eligible assistance in a manner that provides consistent quality care especially for high risk children.	1. Request the AFS Income Maintenance Unit develop simpler eligibility procedures, direct and adequate provider payments and support for education opportunities. 2. Request DHR develop a data gathering system to support future planning for child care reform. 3. Subsidize child care for low income college students and low income teen parents completing their education. 4. Advocate for passage of the federal Act for Better Child Care.
The state must coordinate agency involvement in child care and provide a special focus to assist employers in developing child care options for working families.	1. Continue to promote expansion and coordination of child care services with the state Coordinator of Child Care. 2. Adopt a state policy statement on child care.
The business community and individual employers need support and technical assistance in the various approaches to assist their employees in securing affordable quality care.	1. Support the Coordinator of Child Care in the education of corporations. 2. The Governor should participate in corporate education. 3. The state should expand Dependent Care Assistance benefits for all state employees, with actual subsidies for lower income workers. 4. Develop a private corporate initiative to form a charitable fund for low income child care.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FINDINGS	RECOMMENDATIONS
The Commission will work closely with the Bureau of Labor to help Oregon adapt to the new Parental Leave Law.	1. Monitor any complaints filed with the Civil Rights Division and determine if changes should be considered. 2. Explore alternatives for infant care between employers and employees in cases where employees are considered irreplaceable.
Infant and toddler care is distinctly different from care for older children in program requirements and costs.	1. All infant programs should be monitored for adherence to safety, health and ratio standards. 2. Oregon should reflect costs of state mandated ratio requirements in its subsidy programs. 3. The state education system should include specific training for infant and toddler programs.
At least 22% of Oregon's school age children are left unsupervised after school.	1. The state should classify school age children who are currently going without care "at risk". 2. Educate citizens, educators and other groups concerning successful in-school and community programs for after school care. 3. Explore the possibility of obtaining funding through school districts and community sources. 4. Encourage the development of school board policies regarding space. 5. Explore funding sources for low income school age child care scholarships. 6. Ensure information and referral grants sponsored by the Commission include provisions for school age child care. 7. Encourage funding for an Oregon study on the effect of lack of supervision before and after school.
Working parents of special needs children require extra help with respite care and day care.	1. Fund community based programs to expand respite care throughout the state. 2. Involve local experts in implementing recently funded programs for Information & Referral and the Family Support program. 3. Create a transportation plan for handicapped children in care. 4. Address extra costs through government and private grants for families who have special needs for day care. 5. Provide consultation through local Early Intervention or Mentally Retarded/ Developmentally Disabled programs.
More information and resources are required to support statewide child care information and referral.	1. Compile Interim Report on Information & Referral for 1989 Legislature. 2. Continue to seek grants and technical assistance for statewide I&R.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FINDINGS	RECOMMENDATIONS
The liability insurance crisis is still a reality for Oregon's childcare providers.	1. Report premium increases and policy cancellations that are out of compliance. 2. Continue to educate insurance carriers about the facts of Oregon's day care industry. 3. Involve child care professionals in the rule writing for SB 323. 4. Study the ways in which Oregon child care providers might utilize the federal Risk Retention Act.
Child care for the children of teen parents is essential for their return to school and eventual employment.	1. Encourage a continuum of service for teen parents including on-site day care with a vocational component. 2. Encourage a transfer of children to Head Start programs to continue developmental assistance. 3. Encourage use of information and referral services to develop off-site day care for teen parents. 4. Advocate for before and after school programs that provide supervision to young teens and reduce the rate of teen pregnancy and other risks. 5. Seek funding for research to follow teen parents through the system to demonstrate the relation to the poverty cycle. 6. Close the gaps in support systems by pursuing grants from federal sources.
Existing policies regarding ill children in care must be revised to support the rights of parents to work while caring for their ill child properly.	1. Advocate for family sick leave that acknowledges parents' right to care for their children without fear of work related consequences. 2. Redefine day care exclusion guidelines to reflect more recent medical findings. 3. Train providers in disease and health related issues to reduce contagion. 4. Explore alternative pilot programs for mildly ill children.
Local community planners must deal with the realities of child care as part of contemporary working family life.	1. Local planning councils should review their day care zoning requirement as per HB 2322. 2. Local commissions and fire marshals should review their existing regulations that unduly restrict child care in local neighborhoods and near schools. 3. Public transit planning should address the needs of working families who must include a day care facility enroute to and from work.
Federal legislation can create significant improvements in Oregon's child care support services.	1. Advocate for Oregon congressional co-sponsorship of the Act for Better Child Care, and encourage broadbased citizen support.

NEIL GOLDSCHMIDT
GOVERNOR

Oregon Commission on Child Care

The Honorable Neil Goldschmidt, Governor
The Honorable John Kitzhaber, President of the Senate
The Honorable Vera Katz, Speaker of the House
State Capitol
Salem, Oregon 97310

Dear Governor Goldschmidt, President Kitzhaber, and Speaker Katz;

On behalf of the Commission on Child Care, we are pleased to forward our progress report, "Child Care in Oregon: Emerging Solutions."

This is the second in a three report series addressing the issues, problems and potential solutions critical to the development of accessible, affordable and quality day care in Oregon.

We came to you in 1986 documenting the woeful condition of child care in this state. Your support and leadership have resulted in many of the improvements reported here. As solutions begin to emerge, there is still a great deal of work to be done.

These recommendations are gleaned from the suggestions of many hundreds of Oregonians who have written or spoken at our regular meetings, community meetings and statewide conference. They are not necessarily the responsibility of any single sector, and are intended to stimulate action on the part of all of us. They are a call for collaborative planning and action during the 1988 interim.

Sincerely,

Dawn Marges
Dawn Marges
Commission Chairman 1987

Pamela S. Stebbeds
Pamela Stebbeds
Commission Chairman 1988

cc: Members of the 64th
Legislative Assembly

Cover photo: The Oregonian

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OREGON COMMISSION ON CHILD CARE

INTERIM REPORT TO THE GOVERNOR AND LEGISLATURE

1988

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Our Special Thanks

. . . this year to the following individuals who were especially supportive of the Child Care Commission during the 1987 Legislature.

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and to the many day care providers throughout Oregon who cared for our children while we attended to the business of the Commission.

Acknowledgments

The text of this report was contributed for the most part by individual members of the Oregon Commission on Child Care as part of their sub-committee work over the last two years. In addition, however, five special consultants contributed to sections for which they were distinctly qualified. The Commission gratefully acknowledges the contribution of the following non-commission authors:

Mary Louise McClintock, Department of Human Resources, Child Care Coordinator — Establishment of an Office of Child Care

Marsha Ritzdorf, University of Oregon, Department of Planning, Public Policy and Management — Community Planning

Pamela Fullam and **Barbara Willer**, Oregon and National Associations for the Education of Young Children — National Child Care Issues

Maureen Oliverio, Rent-A-Mom of Oregon — Ill Child Care

INTRODUCTION

CHILD CARE IN OREGON: HEART OF A HEALTHY ECONOMY

"We are as much a society dependent on female labor, and thus in need of a child care system, as we are a society dependent on the automobile and thus in need of roads."

Jay Belsky, Research Professor
Pennsylvania State University

Oregon is experiencing its most rapid, dramatic workforce change since World War II. Between 1979 and 1986 our labor force grew by 11 percent — and women made up 98 percent of that growth! Women are now 44 percent of Oregon's labor force and are expected to be 50 percent by 1995. The majority of Oregon households now have two or more wage earners and the majority of our children need child care on a daily basis.

We will continue to see most women and men employed, looking for work or training for work because:

- Oregon has experienced a net loss in higher paying industrial jobs and a strong increase in lower paying service positions.
- The average buying power of today's two-earner family is lower than that of the one-earner family 20 years ago.
- Last year Oregon registered three divorces for every four marriages. Single householders must work to live.
- Two-thirds of Oregon's employed women are sole breadwinners or married to men who earn less than $15,000 yearly.

The shortage of young entry level workers will continue pressure for all adults to participate in the workforce. For the last 12 years, the birthrate has been 1.8 children per woman — half the 3.6 rate at the peak of the baby boom. The children of the "baby bust" sandwiched between a large aging population and a new "baby boomlet" must support the economy for the next generation.

Child care has become a critical part of the infrastructure that enables social and economic health. Although we spend multi-millions of public dollars on rapid transit to get workers into downtown Portland, many employees say that child care poses a far greater obstacle to their ability to get to work than transportation does. Likewise, good child care is as significant as communications systems for worker productivity on the job. Recent studies show five to nine days a year lost time per parent-employee related to child care problems — lost productivity costing employers about 3 percent more than non-parent employees.

Oregon's families spend upwards of $300,000,000 annually on child care. Compare the revenues of the child care industry to those of other privately held businesses and it is apparent the economic impact of child care spending is often overlooked.

Oregon's Top 10 Private Employers

Ranked by Revenue

Company	Revenue (in millions)
RLC Industries	500+
North Pacific Lumber Co.	450+
R.B. Pamplin Corporation	400+
Ness & Co./Fewell & Assoc.	300+
Child Care in Oregon	**300+**
CH2M Hill Companies, Ltd.	250+
Riedel Resources, Inc.	200+
McCall Oil and Chemical Corp.	150+
Jeld-Wen, Inc.	150+
Les Schwab Tire Centers	150+
Evergreen International Airlines	150+

Source: Oregon Business, October 1987

As an industry, child care employs more workers than any other single employer except state government. In addition to the 10,000 staff employed in 3,600 licensed or registered care facilities, the estimated 30,000 informal family day care homes are a cottage industry that further increases the purchase of goods and services in their communities.

At least 220,000 Oregon children under age 10 have mothers in the labor force and need child care. However, there is only one licensed or registered space for each six children needing care. Five out of six children are cared for informally or are left unattended. The lack of enough good, affordable child care is a drain on the economy and a threat to children's well being.

- A 1986 Census Bureau survey found that 45 percent of single working mothers who were not in the labor force said they would work if child care were available at a reasonable cost.
- In the same survey, 36 percent of all mothers with a family income under $15,000 said they would work if affordable child care were available.

- According to a 1987 AFSCME poll of 600 working Americans, 28 percent of parents with children age 12 and under reported that they had given up a job or a promotion because of lack of child care.
- A study by the Maine Governor's task force found that 20 percent of working parents said they would work more hours if adequate, affordable child care were available. In addition, in nearly 25 percent of all households with young children one or more adults reported that they were forced to quit work, unable to take a job or unable to continue training or education because of lack of child care.

Likewise, good affordable child care enables low income parents to enter the workforce and reduce welfare dependency.

- Findings of a 1980 University of Florida study of a welfare work project showed that the inclusion of child care as a part of the program led to a 50 percent reduction in AFDC recipiency and a 75 percent reduction in AFDC program costs for those who remained on assistance.
- In a 1986 survey of participants of Massachusetts' welfare work and training program, problems with day care were found to be the primary reason that graduates were not employed.
- A study by the Ohio Children's Defense Fund found that for every one dollar spent on day care, $3 was saved on welfare spending.

The economic impact of good child care affects the future as well as the present. A growing body of research suggests that economically disadvantaged children can benefit from high quality early childhood education programs in a variety of ways including:

- improved intellectual and school performance
- reduced need for special education programs
- reduced grade retention
- reduced high school dropout rate
- reduced teen pregnancy rate
- reduced delinquency and arrest rates
- increased employment at age 19
- decreased dependence on welfare as young adults

Research suggests that investing in high quality child care for disadvantaged children results in long term economic savings to taxpayers equivalent to 595 percent of the initial cost of a one year early childhoood education program, and a 300 percent savings based on the cost of a two year program. These savings result from a reduction of taxes spent on special education, crime, and welfare, as well as an increase in income taxes that result from higher future earnings.

If Oregonians think the provision of stable, high-quality child care is too expensive to take on now, just wait five or ten years until we begin to pay the increased costs of remedial education, juvenile court services, and reduced employability. Every related study in recent years points out that high quality child care is cost effective, returning anywhere from two to seven dollars to society for every dollar invested. What does it take to convince us that prevention is far less expensive than intervention and remediation? Good child care is an essential part of the infrastructure that makes social and economic health possible for all of us today and in the future.

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PRIORITY ISSUES

QUALITY IN CHILD CARE PROGRAMS

"We are making decisions about the quality of care for children who soon will be making decisions about the quality of ***our*** *care."*

Dana Friedman,
The Conference Board
Business Research Group

Quality child care requires caregivers who understand how children grow and learn and who teach and care for them accordingly. The ratio of adults to children allows for ample individual attention, and parent involvement is encouraged. High standards for health, safety and nutrition are practiced.

Despite the fact that the **majority** of Oregon's children need care on a daily basis, child care is seen as a private issue. Unlike schools, there is no public system for subsidizing costs of upgrading facilities, credentialing caregivers, or providing technical assistance.

The caregiver shortage is increasing. Center directors report inability to find qualified teachers. Information and Referral agencies are unable to find or recruit enough quality day care homes. Community colleges report fewer students completing early childhood training. Mean hourly earnings of full time female caregivers dropped in real dollars from $2.67 in 1979 to $1.99 in 1986.

The 1987 legislature failed to pass HB 2317, a bill to develop a voluntary certification system for home providers which would also make technical assistance available.

Some community colleges are developing innovative training such as the nanny program at Lane and the director and home provider in-service training series at Chemeketa. The Oregon Association of Day Care Directors, Portland State University Continuing Education, and several home provider associations are among professional organizations attempting to provide some training and technical assistance. Each of these models could be developed or coordinated for broader use.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

1. Continue to emphasize the long range cost effectiveness of quality care, and that it requires the collaborative investment of parents, providers, employers, schools, churches, government and agencies.
2. Establish a family day care specialist in Children's Services Division Day Care Unit who will administer a fund to develop in-service training for home providers through local non-profit organizations.
3. Establish a child care training fund which provides scholarships or reimbursement for provider and center accreditation.
4. Encourage community colleges to provide small business and program assistance for day care homes and centers.
5. Develop a partnership with USDA Child Care Food Program so that quarterly home visits by a nutritionist are combined with broader technical assistance and support.

STATE REGULATION OF CHILD CARE SERVICES

"When a family eats at a fast food restaurant, we do not expect the parents to walk through the kitchen to judge its cleanliness . . . public licensing and inspection processes help to ensure that consumers will find acceptable levels of quality. Licensing of early childhood programs serves exactly this purpose."

Barbara Willer
National Association for the Education of Young Children

The state requires a person who paints fingernails to be licensed, but allows the majority of children in day care to spend most of their waking hours in unlicensed, unmonitored child care arrangements.

Legislation to establish voluntary certification for family day care providers failed, while the number of children allowed full-time in uncertified homes rose from five to six, with up to four additional school-age children when school is not in session during the school year. Voluntary **registration** remains — a paper process that misleads the public to believe these homes receive visits and technical assistance when, in fact, they are visited only in response to a complaint.

Oregon does have stringent rules for certifying day care centers and group homes. The 1987 legislature required that rules for small group day care homes be revised to be more workable for residential settings. A federal grant is making it possible to complete revisions and improvements in center and group home rules by July 1988 with broad involvement by day care certifiers, providers and related agencies.

The number of day care facilities and the number of children in care is steadily increasing, but there is no increase in certification staff and technical assistance. Certifier caseloads are far too high, and requirements administered by other agencies are not coordinated in a consistent timely manner.

In September, 1987, day care certifiers were reclassified separately from other Children's Services Division caseworkers. On July 1, 1988, all caseworkers are expected to advance one salary range, but certifiers are to remain in the current classification. This change is decreasing the attractiveness of certification as a career and is resulting in turnover of qualified, effective personnel.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

1. Abolish misleading home provider registration.
2. Establish a voluntary family day care certification program funded to provide technical assistance and a pre-certification home visit.
3. Require certification for homes receiving state subsidies for children in care.
4. Cap caseloads and increase the number of day care certifiers so that applicants receive adequate consultation, consistent enforcement of standards, coordination of inter-agency requirements and prompt response to community complaints.
5. Classify certifiers with other caseworkers in a similar salary range, commensurate with the complexity of necessary skills and expertise and the numbers of children who are dependent on certifier judgements for their safety and well being.

MAKING CHILD CARE AFFORDABLE

"From 1979 to 1984 Oregon had the largest decline in the number of children served by Aid to Families with Dependent Children of any state in the nation."

Select Committee on Children, Youth and Families
U.S. House of Representatives
100th Congress

Our earlier research found that Oregon's system for providing child care subsidies was complex, ineffective and a disincentive for families to move from welfare to self-sufficiency. In response to these findings the Commission recommended that the state of Oregon develop a payment and program structure which assures the provision of quality care, assures continuity of care, provides incentives for low income parents to move towards self-sufficiency and reduces recidivism.

House Bills 2319 and 2320 were submitted to the Legislature to address these recommendations. Although these bills were not passed, some accomplishments were made. The rate for child care subsidies was increased from 93 cents per hour to $1.00. Meals and commute time are now covered. Adult and Family Services Division has issued a policy decision which eliminates ERDC as a prior resource. House Bill 2760 JOBS bill was passed and funded at 4.8 million dollars. This program will fund seven pilot projects throughout the state which will operate programs to best address clients employment and training needs.

The new administrator, Freddye Webb-Pettit has declared child care a top priority. There is an increased awareness of child care and a stronger commitment to child care by Adult and Family Services Division staff. An interagency child care task force has been formed to address the complicated and technical problems in delivery of child care subsidies.

In studying the subsidy programs now administered by the state, the Commission has concluded that the definition of an appropriate or reasonable rate should be accepted and adhered to consistently throughout state programs. We believe that the rate provided would be defined as "reasonable day care cost necessary to comply with state and federal regulation", rather than "reasonable and customary" which is often used to justify the cheapest rate available in an area. The cheapest rate available in an area is most often tied to care that does not meet state or federal standards.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

1. Continue to work with the Income Maintenance Unit to develop a simpler system that expands eligibility, direct and adequate provider payments and support for education opportunities.
2. Request the Department of Human Resources to direct its divisions to develop and utilize a comprehensive and uniform data gathering system providing statistical support for creative planning for child care reform.
3. Subsidize child care for low income students at Oregon colleges and universities; and for low income teen parents completing high school.
4. Advocate for the passage of the federal Act for Better Child Care sponsored by the Alliance for Better Child Care (see National Child Care Issues.)

ESTABLISHMENT OF AN OFFICE OF CHILD CARE

"And I want the message to go out to all parts of the state that child care makes good business sense and that my office is available to help businesses put together programs that support their working parent employees."

Mary Louise McClintock
Coordinator of Child Care
for the State of Oregon

At the request of Governor Goldschmidt, the 1987 Legislative Assembly funded a Child Care Coordinator position and placed it in the Office of the Director of the Department of Human Resources. The Coordinator is charged with 1) promoting coordination among state agencies involved in child care and 2) assisting employers in the development of employee child care programs. Declaring the concerns of working parents to be a top priority in his administration, Governor Goldschmidt in September announced the appointment of Mary Louise McClintock to the new position.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

1. Promote expansion and improvement in state child care services by supporting the mission and programs of the Child Care Coordinator.
2. Adopt a state policy statement on child care to be presented to the Governor and read as a proclamation during the Week of the Young Child in April.

Photo: Kraig Scattarella/Mike Lloyd, The Oregonian

ENCOURAGING EMPLOYER AND CORPORATE INVOLVEMENT

"It is important to emphasize that employees should not have to choose between being good parents or family members and being good workers."

William Brock, former Secretary
U. S. Department of Labor

A recently completed survey by City Club of Portland reported that only 9 percent of Portland metropolitan employers responding to this survey included child care in a flexible or cafeteria benefit plan whereby employees could pay for child care in lieu of salary. A clear trend reported in this study is a steady increase in personnel policies which permit the use of sick leave for family illness, and modified or flexible work schedules to meet child care responsibilities.

The state has appointed a coordinator of child care. This position will be responsible for preparing and disseminating literature on child care benefits and will assist in corporate education. Also, the state has indeed demonstrated itself to be a model employer by announcing dependent care assistance through tax-free salary reduction and reimbursement as a new benefit option.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

1. Support the Coordinator of Child Care in a combined effort to provide widespread corporate education of child care benefits.
2. The Governor should support employer programs of child care benefits and participate in publicity or conferences designed to inform corporations.
3. The state should implement dependent care assistance uniformly throughout all public employee benefit packages, with careful attention to the alternative choices for low income families.
4. Oregon corporations and private foundations should form a charitable fund for day care assistance for low income parents.

PARENTAL LEAVE

"This was truly a bipartisan bill, as both Republicans and Democrats know how to have babies."

Governor Neil Goldschmidt

The passage of House Bill 2321 was without question the most highly publicized of the Commission's legislative work during the 1987 session. Although the bill did not pass unanimously in either the House or Senate, it did finally pass by a wide margin. And while some changes were made to the original pre-filed bill, the basic intent was left intact — to allow full time parental care of infants in their first twelve weeks of life, without the fear of loss of employment.

After Governor Goldschmidt signed the bill in July, the Bureau of Labor quickly set about to prepare the final statutes, make the proper filings with the Secretary of State, and prepare for finalization of the rules. Particular emphasis was given to scrutinizing and resolving the technical language as it related to reinstatement rights and the definitions of employee and parent. Public hearings took place in six Oregon cities in the fall, with notification mailed to all employers of over 25 employees, and citizens were invited to submit their written questions and comments through November 15, 1987, with the statute set to take effect January 1, 1988.

The Civil Rights Division of the Bureau of Labor will enforce the statute. Staff members in the Bureau of Labor and Child Care Commission members will keep in close contact during 1988 to monitor the impact of parental leave. If adjustments to the definitions, rules or statutes seem necessary, the Commission and Bureau will work together to highlight those areas for the 1989 legislature. Commission members will be available to assist employers to deal with difficult situations and explore feasible alternatives. We will also monitor the civil rights complaints, and note public reaction to the exemption extended to employers of less than 25 employees.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

1. Monitor any complaints filed with the Civil Rights Division and determine if changes to definitions, exemptions or rules should be considered.
2. Explore alternative agreements and provision for infant care between employers and employees in cases where employees are considered irreplaceable.

INFANT AND TODDLER CARE

"Good programs for children from birth to age 3 are distinctly different from all other types of programs — they are NOT a scaled-down version of a good program for preschool children."

National Association for the
Education of Young Children,
Developmentally Appropriate Practice

The need for day care programs serving infants and toddlers (children between 6 weeks and 30 months) is outpacing the available resources.

Information and Referral services report that up to 80% of the calls they receive are requesting infant and toddler care. At the same time, few providers care for this age group.

The rate of physical, emotional, social and intellectual development for children under age 3 is unequalled at any other age. Caring for infants and toddlers requires special knowledge and skills. The pool of skilled infant caregivers is extremely limited in Oregon because there are few resources available — colleges and universities do not offer ample coursework and there are few programs where experience may be gained. At the present time, there is little assurance of quality for Oregon's infants and toddlers because most care is provided in non-certified facilities.

The state does not recognize the additional cost factor in the rates it pays to subsidize infant/toddler child care for low income working families:

COMPARISON: INFANT/TODDLER WITH PRE-SCHOOL

Staff Ratio: 250% more staff required by law for infants and toddlers

Oregon Employment Related Day Care: Pays only 35% higher for infants and toddlers

Oregon Aid to Dependent Children: Has no pay differential for infants and toddlers.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

1. The state should monitor all programs that provide care to infants and toddlers. At a minimum, all facilities caring for this vulnerable age group should meet safety, health and group size/ratio requirements.
2. Oregon should recognize and encourage payment of real costs for infants and toddlers by setting subsidy rates that reflect the added staff costs caused by ratio requirements. This will encourage more providers to serve this age group and thus give low-income families more opportunities to find appropriate care for their children.
3. The state should develop training resources for infant and toddler caregivers. This should include encouraging universities and community colleges to offer appropriate courses and on-site training opportunities. Additionally, the state should educate the public on the importance of skilled infant and toddler care.

SCHOOL AGE CHILD CARE

"The kids are out of school. The folks have to work. What's a parent to do?"

Linda Kramer, correspondent
The Oregonian

Children forced into self-care before and after school have the potential of developing behavioral risks. There is a need for community-wide support of information referral services that help parents who must find before and after school care.

Through discussions with school districts and school advocates, the Commission has found a reluctance on the part of school districts to participate in after school care programs. This reluctance is based upon perceived problems such as disruption of shared classrooms, objection by school personnel, liability problems, and lack of need. At the same time, the Commission has heard of successful programs that have been established in school districts throughout the state through intensive efforts at cooperation between private providers and school districts.

School district space limitations and inability to transport for out-of-school care are the major problems which must be overcome by before and after school child care providers. The Commission continues to find that encouraging cooperation between private providers and school districts is a preferable means of encouraging additional program supply.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

1. Classify school age children who are without care as "at risk," to encourage funding for the development of programs and to indicate concern over the increasing acceptance of self care as an alternative child care.
2. Educate the education community, business, youth service programs and care providers about successful school and community programs for after school care.
3. Explore the possibility of obtaining funding through school districts as well as community sources for costs of operating school age child care programs or providing transportation to community based programs.
4. Encourage the development of school board policies regarding space that ensures priority for school age child care programs.
5. Explore funding sources for low income school age child care scholarships.
6. Ensure information and referral grants sponsored by the commission include provisions for school age child care.
7. Obtain funding for an Oregon study on the relationship between lack of supervision on academic and behavior problems, delinquency, drug and alcohol experimentation, teen pregnancy, kidnaping and child abuse.

DAY CARE FOR SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN

"I would like every center to know what resources are available to them and where they can get help in learning to care for handicapped children because it is such a positive experience for both handicapped children and for the center."

Parent of Handicapped Child

The 1987 Oregon Legislature provided funds through HB 2318 for expanding or establishing child care information and referral services. The statute directs these funds to be used to assist, among others, parents of handicapped children in locating appropriate child care.

SB 522 designated Family Support as a service to families with members with developmental disabilities. It established funding for a two year "Family Support" pilot project in two or more areas in Oregon. Family Support offers a wide range of optional supports and services designed to increase each family's independence and caregiving capacity. These services could address respite needs of the family, but are not specifically designated for that purpose.

Day care can be a positive experience and contribute to the care of handicapped in the following ways:

- Day care works with a very positive child/staff ratio to begin with, particularly compared to public school classrooms.
- Early childroom education is a good background for caring for handicapped because it looks at the whole child.
- Day Care has flexible curriculum, ongoing parent involvement, and utilization of community resources.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

1. Fund community based coordination of recruitment, training, and provision for respite care throughout the state.
2. Involve people who know and understand the respite needs in each community in the implementation of both the Information and Referral and Family Support programs to insure those needs are considered fully.
3. Research transportation needs by asking state case managers to create a master transportation plan addressing the specific problems for rural areas vs. urban settings.
4. Address extra costs through government and private day care grants for families of handicapped children.
5. Provide consultation through local Early Intervention programs or Mentally Retarded/Developmentally Disabled programs, and provide a resource list to day care centers, preschool programs and registered family providers enrolling handicapped children or those willing to consider accepting such children.

CHILD CARE INFORMATION AND REFERRAL SERVICES

"There are extensive gaps in availability of Child Care I & R across the state of Oregon, both geographically and in accessibility to lower income persons."

Statewide Survey on Child Care
I & R Providers, March 1987

In December 1986 a two year federal Dependent Care Block Grant grant was awarded to the Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action Agency to establish a state clearinghouse and technical assistance for child care information and referral. They surveyed the existing child care I & R providers and they are providing technical assistance to both present and potential providers.

The 1987 Legislature passed HB 2318 which appropriated $100,000 to the Commission on Child Care to be used during the biennium for grants to expand community-based public and private child care information and referral agencies and to assist in establishing such agencies in communities whihc are not served.

The Commission on Child Care worked with the Dependent Care Block Grant recipients in developing a Request For Proposal process to award grants in compliance with HB 2318 requirements. Four grantees were selected in December with contracts running January 1988 through June 1989, to develop or expand service in the following counties:

Columbia, Clatsop, Tillamook: Community Action Team

Marion, Polk: Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action Agency

Linn, Benton: Linn-Benton Community College

Lane: American Red Cross

RECOMMENDED ACTION

1. Compile data received from the grantees, so that an interim report may be developed by November 1988. This report will identify service gaps and discuss the program models developed in participating communities.
2. Seek funding to expand child care information and referral services into additional communities, to continue technical assistance to existing services, and to assure that comparable data can be collected statewide.

LIABILITY INSURANCE

"It is easy to feel hopeless and victimized by the current situation. Liability insurance is very difficult to obtain and when it is available the premiums are exorbitant."

Steffen Saifer
Oregon Children's League News

Throughout the 1987 legislative session it became apparent that many industries needed and were seeking some type of relief from liability insurance problems. Consequently, liability and insurance reform in general became a major legislative issue. At the federal level, President Reagan signed the Risk Retention Act of 1986, co-sponsored by Oregon's Ron Wyden. In the last days of the Oregon legislative session many bills relating to insurance were folded into the final version of SB 323, the main insurance reform legislation.

The child care industry was vocal in identifying their problems with a variety of insurance concerns. The majority of the recommendations were addressed from a legislative standpoint. It remains to be seen how administrative rules will be written to interpret the law.

The reporting by insurance companies will not be in effect until April 1988. Statistics will be kept through May 1989. The analysis of these statistics will not be completed and available until 1990. Thus, it will be several years until these findings can be used to demonstrate that the child care industry is neither high risk nor high loss.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

1. Remind child care professionals to be persistent in reporting premium increases and policy cancellations that are out of compliance with SB 323.
2. Continue to educate insurance carriers. Of particular concern are the short latchkey programs which are being charged premiums as if they were full day care facilities.
3. Encourage child care professional organizations to participate actively in writing the administrative rules to implement SB 323 provisions.
4. Study, in conjunction with an insurance consultant, the ways in which Oregon day care providers might utilize the benefits of the 1986 Risk Retention Act.

EMERGING ISSUES

TEEN PARENT CHILD CARE

"The best means of helping the world of tomorrow is to help the children today."

Representative Mike Kopetski
Oregon House of Representatives

The focus of most policy makers considering teen pregnancy is on prevention. Little attention is focused on the teen parent, and the young child of that parent.

Teen parents often become stuck in the "welfare cycle" because of the lack of support services available to assist them in completing their education and in finding jobs. Teen parents often fall between the cracks of social service agencies that provide child care assistance. Returning to school to obtain a high school diploma disqualifies them for eligibility because they are not involved in a work search.

Adequate child care for teen parents benefits the parents and child by allowing the parents to complete their education and become productive members of their community. Model teen child care programs also include lessons in parenting and child development. In addition, available child care helps relieve the stress associated with teen parenting and reduces the potential for child abuse.

There are federal funds available to assist in child care programs for teen parents; however, a very recent study conducted by the U. S. House of Representatives indicates Oregon has barely explored the use of these funds.

The nationally acclaimed YWCA Teen Parent Program in Salem combines federal, local school district and other funds. This model project provides comprehensive services in high school completion, child care, parent education and social services. Teen fathers are involved as well as mothers.

In 1986 there were 840 documented teen pregnancies in Multnomah county. Of this number, 240 have made contact with Portland Public Schools. Forty-seven teen moms are currently on PPS waiting lists for daycare so they can return to school. Summer vacation causes some problem in retention. However, of 30 teen parents involved in the Portland Public School Summer Youth Employment Program, all but two returned to school the next fall.

The Commission believes that support services linked to continuing education are the key to assisting the children of teen parents. The Commission will continue to advocate on-site day care with a vocational component which would help in de-glamorizing parenting, assist with the coordination of parenting groups to educate teens about child development, give babies of teen parents a developmental head start and give parents access to school.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

1. Encourage a continuum of services for teen parents: on-site day care with a vocational component.
2. Encourage the transfer of children to Head Start programs to continue developmental assistance.
3. Use information and referral services, to develop off-site day care for teen parents.
4. Advocate for before and after school programs that provide supervision to young teens to reduce the rate of teen pregnancy and other risks.
5. Seek funding for research to follow teen parents through the system to demonstrate that money spent on child care for teen parents enabling them to return to school and complete their education is money well spent to break the poverty cycle.
6. Close the gaps in support systems to ensure their availability to teen parents. Pursue grants from federal sources to fund appropriate support services.

ILL CHILD CARE

"Problems with child care are the most significant predictors of absenteeism and unproductive time at work."

Fortune Magazine Survey
February 1987

The issue of sick child care exaggerates the conflict between the two essential functions of the family: 1) The economic responsibility to work, to support family members and to maintain family autonomy, and 2) the responsibility to meet the physical and psychological needs of children in a stable and nurturing environment. Corporate America is acutely aware of the impact of the sick child on the workplace. The General Mills American Family report of 1981 found a high correlation not only between missed work and caring for a sick child, but also between caring for a sick child and leaving work early, coming in late, dealing with family issues during working hours, and on-and-off job stress.

Because every child gets sick, every working parent comes to a personal understanding of the lack of community support and/or resources available to them when illness strikes...always suddenly and without warning. Few families have extended family members able to care for their sick children, and traditionally the mother in dual career households must stay home. In single parent families, there is not even a choice about who must miss time from work. For many parents, especially single parents, their choice to stay at home may cost them their jobs — a severe penalty for attempting to blend work and family.

Record number of single working parents and dual career families are forcing our communities to develop solutions to meet the needs of its ill children. It took the economic impact of the problem to create this opportunity for change, but the outcome will hopefully reaffirm a commitment to the importance of family. Instead of forcing parents to minimize symptoms or sneak children into daycare centers, current scientific information would support exclusion from group care only for the presence of diarrhea, perhaps chickenpox, and treatable illness prior to the equivalent of one day's treatment.

Pilot programs are in existence across the country and some models seem more viable for Oregon than others. Possible options include day care centers setting aside a "get well" room; infirmaries can function out of hospital based programs; or specific recovery "Chicken Soup" centers can be opened. Traveling caregiver programs are also in existence which afford the child the opportunity to be cared for by a competent caregiver in the security of his familiar home environment. It would appear that all of these options should be developed as no one program will meet the needs of all families requiring services.

Existing policies will need to be altered or done away with, sources of funding for new programs will need to be found, and a national attitude that values children and families will need to evolve.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

1. Advocate for parents' right to care for their children, including parents' right to take time off, without fear of work-related consequences. Family sick leave policy must take into account the normally frequent occurrence of illness in very young children.
2. Redefine day care exclusion guidelines. Incorporate up to date medical guidelines in the new day care regulations due for release in 1988.
3. Train providers to handle minor illness symptoms and practice procedures already in effect to minimize the spread of disease. This could include a Health Department, Pediatric Society and Commission sponsored training related to cross-contamination and other health issues.
4. Explore alternative pilot programs offering care for mildly ill children.

COMMUNITY PLANNING

"Does the exclusion of day-care centers or restrictions on day-care homes in single family zones best serve the interest of today's families?"

Marsha Ritzdorf, U. of Oregon
Department of Planning, Public Policy
and Management, in an address to the
Fifth Annual Zoning Institute

The impact of child care shortages is most acutely felt at the local level. A recent survey of parents seeking child care showed the number one problem to be finding a center which was conveniently located.

Affordable, conveniently located and quality child care is one of the most pressing concerns of contemporary working life. According to the 1985 census figures, women workers make up 44 percent of the U. S. Labor force. In 1985, 62.3% — nearly two-thirds — of all women with children under 18 years of age worked outside the home.

If progress is to be made in this century, it is imperative that the negotiating process begin now at the municipal level. The first step is to establish awareness at the grass roots level of the ways in which local land policy is affecting the daily lives of working families. Both men and women need to question land use patterns that deny them the right to work at home, and to have their children watched in small neighborhood based day care centers. Small day care homes should be allowed by right in all zones, and with the passage of HB 2322 the state of Oregon has made this a reality. Day care centers should be allowed by right, as long as they provide off-street parking and meet all local building code requirements. The complex issues surrounding the siting of child care centers in residential neighborhoods should be a priority discussion in the year ahead as they currently are volatile issues in many Oregon communities. The Commission is particularly interested in zoning which would not restrict child care facilities from locating close to neighborhood schools.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

1. Local planning councils and commissions should begin to review their zoning requirements and remove restrictions which would disallow small day care homes in any zone, as per HB 2322, or would prevent day care centers who otherwise meet all building code requirements from locating in all zones.
2. Local land use commissions and fire marshals should review existing regulations to ensure they do not conflict with state regulations and/or unduly restrict small day care providers in local neighborhoods.
3. Public transit planning should address the needs of working families who must include a day care facility enroute to and from work.

NATIONAL CHILD CARE ISSUES THAT IMPACT OREGON

"Despite the statistics demonstrating a dramatic increase in the need for child care services for working parents, the United States has no national policy regarding child care, nor anything that even remotely resembles a coordinated approach . . ."

Suzanne Martinez, JD
Legislative Assistant to
U.S. Senator Alan Cranston

The current federal session has introduced or is about to introduce a number of bills targeted at better child care and at welfare reform. The most significant is a sweeping reform bill aimed directly at child care— "The Act for Better Child Care Services." Of the many bills before Congress this year, the Act for Better Child Care is the most significant package we could hope for improving child care throughout the nation. We encourage Oregon's congressional delegation to co-sponsor this bill.

The Act for Better Child Care Services

S 1885 and HR 3660

Sponsors: Sen Dodd (D-CT) and Rep Kildee (D-MI). Rep. Ron Wyden of Oregon is a co-sponsor.

Drafted by a national coalition of 85 child and family groups, unions, education, professional organizations and others, the Alliance for Better Child Care (ABC) bill was introduced in the fall of 1987. The $2.5 billion act:

- allocates funds to target those with the greatest need
- helps make child care more affordable
- helps states administer and coordinate child care policies
- encourages coordination of state and local resources
- improves early childhood development opportunities for low income and handicapped children
- strengthens the quality of child care
- provides access to scholarships for caregiver training
- helps to improve protections for children
- makes child care more accessible
- increases the supply of quality child care for all families
- requires U.S. Health and Human Services to support state efforts

Other Federal Legislation Affecting Oregon

S 1271 Day Care for Working Families

Sen Metzenbaum (D-OH)

Supports employer-community pilot projects; increases Social Security Block grant; creates small business start-up loan program for centers in states that enact minimum licensing standards.

S 1511 Family Security Act of 1987

Sen Moynihan (D-NY)

Welfare reform bill focusing on job training; states must assure child care if participation is required; states will provide transition child care for nine months with sliding fee; subsidized care must meet state and local regulations.

HR 30 Fair Work Opportunity Act

Rep Hawkins (D-CA)

Job Training and education programs for welfare recipients; separate child care bill would provide subsidized child care assistance with priority to programs providing developmentally appropriate care on full-time, full-year schedule.

S 249 and HR 295 Parental Leave

Sen Dodd (D-CT) and Rep Schroeder (D-CO)

Allows parents up to 18 weeks of unpaid family leave every two years to care for a newborn or seriously ill child. Also permits 26 weeks of unpaid medical leave every two years, and provides leave to care for seriously ill parents. A compromise bill is underway that reduces the time off to 10 weeks, and exempts employers of less than 50 employees.

HR 541 On-site Child Care Privatization Act

Rep Biaggia (D-NY)

Amends IRS tax code to give 15% tax credit to employers for start-up and ongoing costs of an on-site child care program and a 10% credit for program personnel costs.

HR 1001 Child Care Opportunities for Families

Rep Miller (C-CA) and 70 cosponsors

Authorizes substantial funding increases for states to improve regulation and monitoring systems; to establish full-day and kindergarten and child care in public schools; to expand public-private partnerships; for training child care and licensing personnel in child development/abuse prevention; for training family day care providers. Bill also raises level of AFDC Income disregard for child care.

HR 1572 Child Care Act of 1987

Rep Johnson (R-CT)

Creates $300 million annual federal voucher program for child care by capping the Dependent Care Tax Credit at $70,000.

HR 1720 Welfare Reform

Rep Ford (D-TN)

Assures provision of child care in welfare reform.

HR 2644 Child Care Coordination and Information Act of 1987

Rep Collins (D-ILL) and Rep Johnson (R-CT)

Requires HHS to coordinate federally funded child care services; sets up child care information clearinghouse and provides for comprehensive analysis of child care supply and demand, studying cost of services and impact of training and provider pay on quality of care.

SB 1678 Child Care Services Improvement Act

Sen Hatch (R-Utah)

Provides block grant for demonstration projects that improve low income assistance, school age and ill child care. Reforms liability insurance and establishes facility improvement loans for licensed providers. Creates tax credits for employer supported child care benefits, and gives mothers who stay home with their infants for 6 months an additional personal income tax exemption. Costs $875 million over 3 years.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Based on a review of the above bills, we find that only one is a comprehensive solution to the nation's child care needs and therefore recommend the following action for 1988:

1. Oregon's Child Care organizations and advocates, and Oregon's congressional delegation should endorse and co-sponsor the Act For Better Child Care Services.

Amy Wilkins, Child Care Programs Assistant from Children's Defense Fund, Washington D.C., speaks on the Act for Better Child Care Services at the 1987 Oregon Commission on Child Care statewide conference. *Photo: Phil and Mary Lohrenz*

1987 IN REVIEW

1987 LEGISLATIVE ISSUES

"It's a way of encouraging the private sector to deal with the increasing need for day care, instead of the state shouldering the responsibility."

State Senator Rod Monroe
on the passage of SB 734

1987 was the first year the Commission had an opportunity to file legislation. Decisions had to be made as to which bills to sponsor and beyond that, which should be filed by the Commission itself, and which would be more appropriately carried by a legislator and co-sponsors. Agencies were also filing bills which impacted child care. Thus, our work involved not only the six bills the Commission chose to file, but testifying and working with legislators and agencies who wished to sponsor child care related legislation. Although the Commission and many child care organizations are pleased with the outcome of some of the bills filed, there are still significant problems to be addressed.

BILLS THAT PASSED

HB 2318 Grant Fund for Community Information and Referral programs

Provides $100,000 for the Commission to implement a grant program to establish or expand community based public and private child care information and referral agencies. Sets standards that the agencies must meet in order to qualify for grants. Requires a 50% matching grant from local sources.

HB 2321 Parental Leave

Mandates up to 12 weeks unpaid leave for birth or adoption of child; covers both mothers and fathers (not at same time) without loss of job position; exempts employers with less than 25 employees.

HB 2322 Revision to Home Day Care Statutes

Effective July 1, 1988 revises definitions of some common day care terms; permits family day care providers who are in compliance with state regulations to care for up to twelve children without having to meet any more local zoning requirements than they meet as a private residence; requires day care licensing when there are seven full-time day care children in care; allows unregistered providers to care for up to six children full-time and up to four additional school-age children during the school year when school is not in session. Requires day care home rules to be revised. It should be noted that this bill was finalized after many changes by the Human Resources committees and does not reflect the actual set of changes as pre-filed by the Commission.

HB 2760 New JOBS

Establishes a pilot program in Adult and Family Services to help welfare recipients achieve self-sufficiency and prevent long-term welfare dependency. One of the initial goals is to improve child care support services through both testing of procedural changes and through coordination of child care services among state agencies.

SB 323 Liability Insurance

This bill was a large document passed in response to the liability crisis faced by all Oregon industries including child care. Among the many features that can ease the pressure for day care centers are limits on director's and officer's liability; justification for cancellation and other limits on cancellation; approval for rate increases over 15%; recordkeeping on certain industries including child care; group purchase, professional funds and market assistance plans.

HB 2884 Establishes Dependent Care Assistance option for State Employees

Requires state to provide employees with salary reduction option for tax free reimbursement of dependent care expenses.

SB 734 Tax Credit to Companies Assisting with Child Care

Gives employers a tax credit worth 50% of any money spent directly or indirectly on support services for employee child care. Includes providing or contracting for day care facilities, referral services, payment subsidies, and other parent support services.

SB 524 Headstart-type Programs in Public Schools and Parent-As-Teacher Programs

Established a grant fund to develop some public

school based programs for at risk preschoolers, and involve parents in teaching their children.

BILLS THAT DID NOT PASS

HB 2317 Voluntary Certification of Day Care Homes

Would have instructed the Children's Services division to abolish the current registration program, and implement a voluntary certification program which included an on-site visit, ongoing training programs, and technical support to providers. Was not included in the Division's budget and would have required funding by Ways and Means to increase the agency's proposed budget.

HB 2319 Low Income Assistance

Would have made four changes to the policies and procedures currently used by Adult and Family Services in subsidizing child care for the working poor and those seeking employment. Some of the changes were addressed by Adult and Family Services and announced prior to the end of the session. Other changes, which would have revised Oregon's method for determining eligibility for child care assistance would have required increased funding by Ways and Means outside the agency's proposed budget (See Making Child Care Affordable for more details).

HB 2320 Student Child Care Assistance

Would have appropriated $1,500,000 for the Scholarship Commission to subsidize day care for low income student parents in their last two years of college. Funding could have come from discontinuing the state child care tax credit for families earning over $70,000. Was approved in concept by House Revenue, but was not passed out of Ways and Means.

HB 2891 School Age Child Care

Would have established a matching grant fund for school age child programs showing cooperation between school districts and community organizations. Did not leave Ways and Means.

SB 896 Neighborhood Latchkey Programs

Would have established a grant fund for pilot projects involving neighborhoods in the supervision of children who are too old for structured child care and too young to be left alone. Did not leave Ways and Means.

COMMUNITY MEETINGS

The Commission sponsored seven community meetings throughout Oregon during July and August. The meetings were similar to public hearings but intentionally less formal and structured. The purpose was to give citizens an opportunity to meet with commissioners and exchange ideas on a wide range of child care topics. In some communities, the meetings were co-sponsored by interested groups such as the American Red Cross, the Oregon Association for the Education of Young Children, and Head Start.

Particular emphasis was given to reaching those citizens, working parents and their providers who could not attend regularly scheduled daytime commission meetings in Portland or Salem. For this reason, the meetings were held in the evening and across the state: Pendleton, Roseburg, Lincoln City, Eugene, Salem, urban Portland and suburban Portland.

Of the many topics discussed, the issues most frequently raised were:

- Liability Insurance problems
- Unworkable Adult and Family Services policies
- The need for more low income assistance
- More regulation of home day care providers
- More training for child care workers
- Better communication among providers and parents

The above six issues were raised at four or more meetings out of the seven. The continuing problem of Liability Insurance was discussed at all meetings, thus making it the only topic to be raised in every part of the state.

Other frequently raised issues included more funding for day care start-up costs, improved parent education and public awareness of quality child care, and more information and referral services in local communities.

In two meetings there was testimony in favor of less state regulation of family day care providers. This is compared to four meetings where testimony favored more state regulation. The problem of whether to develop family day care certification or licensing continues to be the most controversial subject the Commission has considered. However, it is apparent that, among those who are concerned enough to attend child care meetings, the majority favor increased regulation of family day care by a margin of 2 to 1.

STATEWIDE CONFERENCE

The Commission sponsored a statewide conference or "retreat" at the Silver Creek Conference Center in Silver Falls State Park August 5th through 7th. Approximately 70 individuals and organizations were represented. The purpose of the retreat was to network all the various organizations advocating for child care and children's issues, and to form a comprehensive action plan for the next biennium. Similar to the community meetings, participants were given an opportunity to voice their opinions on what they perceived as the major problems in Oregon. Beyond that, however, attendees participated in developing action plans to resolve the identified problems. By the end of the conference, a comprehensive list of issues and potential actions plans was developed.

While the community meetings were intended to reach day care providers and working parents who could not normally participate in commission meetings, the conference tended to attract child care professionals, children's advocates and labor representatives who are continually involved in problems related to children's issues.

The four major concerns expressed by all conference participants were:

- Public and Parent Awareness of the Importance of Quality Child Care
- Assistance for Low Income Working Parents
- Employer Benefits Information Disseminated statewide
- A State Policy on Child Care

Other frequently discussed issues were: A full Office of Child Care to centralize state support services, state involvement in school age child care, more and better quality infant care, training and support systems for child care providers, rewrite of regulations, local government participation in child care issues, and attention to sick child care options.

Not all the action ideas discussed will be pursued by the Commission. In fact, due to the varying opinions, some suggestions were actually in opposition to others. It fell to the Commission to decide which of the many excellent suggested actions were selected for attention this coming year.

A full list of the issues and suggested actions, many of which could be implemented locally, can be obtained by writing to Conference Action Plans, 25672 SW Ladd Hill Rd., Sherwood, OR 97140.

Tom Tison and Cornetta Smith discuss concerns of inner-city day care directors.
Photo: Phil and Mary Lohrenz

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